

SIPDE

Good experienced riders remain aware of what is going on around them. They improve their riding strategy by using SIPDE, a 5-step process used to make appropriate judgments, and apply them correctly in different traffic situations:

- Scan
- Identify
- Predict
- Decide
- Execute

Let's examine each of these steps.

SCAN

Search aggressively ahead, to the sides and behind to avoid potential hazards even before they arise. How assertively you search, and how much time and space you have, can eliminate or reduce harm. Focus even more on finding potential escape routes in or around intersections, shopping areas, school and construction zones.

Search for:

- **Oncoming traffic** that may turn left in front of you.
- **Traffic** coming from the left and right.
- **Traffic** approaching from behind.
- **Hazardous** road conditions.

Be especially alert in areas with limited visibility. Visually “busy” surroundings could hide you and your motorcycle from others.

IDENTIFY

Locate hazards and potential conflicts.

- **Vehicles and other motorcycles** — may move into your path and increase the likelihood of a crash.
- **Pedestrians and animals** — are unpredictable, and make short, quick moves.
- **Stationary objects** — potholes, guard rails, bridges, roadway signs, hedges, or trees won't move into your path but may influence your riding strategy.

PREDICT

Consider speed, distance, and direction of hazards to anticipate how they may affect you. Cars moving into your path are more critical than those moving away or remaining stationary.

Predict where a collision may occur. Completing this “what if ...?” phrase to estimate results of contacting or attempting to avoid a hazard depends on your knowledge and experience.

DECIDE

Determine what you need to do based on your prediction.

The mental process of determining your course of action depends on how aggressively you searched. The result is your action and knowing which strategy is best for the situation. You want to eliminate or reduce the potential hazard. You must decide when, where and how to take action. Your constant decision making tasks must stay sharp to cope with constantly changing traffic situations.

The decisions you make can be grouped by the types of hazards you encounter.

- **Single hazard**
- **Two hazards**
- **Multiple hazards**

EXECUTE

Carry out your decision.

To create more space and minimize harm from any hazard:

- **Communicate** your presence with lights and/or horn.
- **Adjust your speed** by accelerating, stopping or slowing.
- **Adjust your position** and/or direction.

Apply the old adage “one step at a time” to handle two or more hazards. Adjust speed to permit two hazards to separate. Then deal with them one at a time as single hazards. Decision making becomes more complex with three or more hazards. Weigh consequences of each and give equal distance to the hazards.

In potential high risk areas, such as intersections, shopping areas, school and construction zones, cover the clutch and both brakes to reduce the time you need to react.

INTERSECTIONS

The greatest potential for conflict between you and other traffic is at intersections. An intersection can be in the middle of an urban area or at a driveway on a residential street — anywhere traffic may cross your path of travel. Over one-half of motorcycle/car crashes are caused by drivers entering a rider’s right-of-way. Cars that turn left in front of you, including cars turning left from the lane to your right, and cars on side streets that pull into your lane, are the biggest dangers. Your use of SIPDE [p. 17] at intersections is critical.

There are no guarantees that others see you. Never count on “eye contact” as a sign that a driver will yield. Too often, a driver looks right at a motorcyclist and still fails to “see” him. The only eyes that you can count on are your own. If a car can enter your path, assume that it will. Good riders are always “looking for trouble” — not to get into it, but to stay out of it.

Increase your chances of being seen at intersections. Ride with your headlight on in a lane position that provides the best view of oncoming traffic. Provide a space cushion around the motorcycle that permits you to take evasive action.

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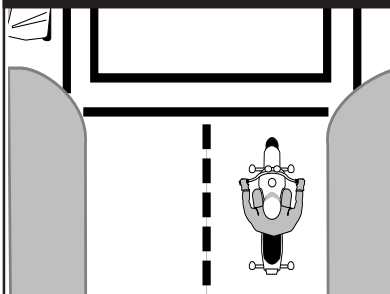
Test Yourself

To reduce your reaction time, you should:

- A. Ride slower than the speed limit.
- B. Cover the clutch and the brakes.
- C. Shift into neutral when slowing.
- D. Pull in the clutch when turning.

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SMALL INTERSECTIONS

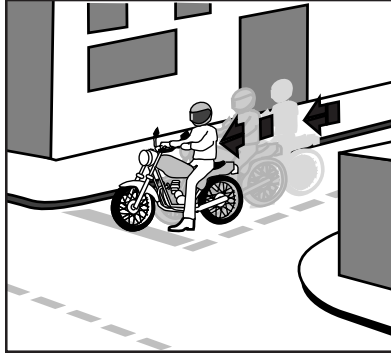


Reduce your speed as you approach an intersection. After entering the intersection, move away from vehicles preparing to turn. Do not change speed or position radically. The driver might think that you are preparing to turn.

If you approach a blind intersection, move to the portion of the lane that will bring you into another driver's field of vision at the earliest possible moment. In this picture, the rider has moved to the left portion of the lane — away from the parked car — so the driver on the cross street can see him as soon as possible.

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STOP SIGNS



If you have a stop sign or stop line, stop there first. Then edge forward and stop again, just short of where the cross-traffic lane meets your lane. From that position, lean your body forward and look around buildings, parked cars, or bushes to see if anything is coming. Just make sure your front wheel stays out of the cross lane of travel while you're looking.

PASSING PARKED CARS

When passing parked cars, stay toward the left of your lane. You can avoid problems caused by doors opening, drivers getting out of cars, or people stepping from between cars. If oncoming traffic is present, it is usually best to remain in the center-lane position to maximize your space cushion.

A bigger problem can occur if the driver pulls away from the curb without checking for traffic behind. Even if he does look, he may fail to see you.

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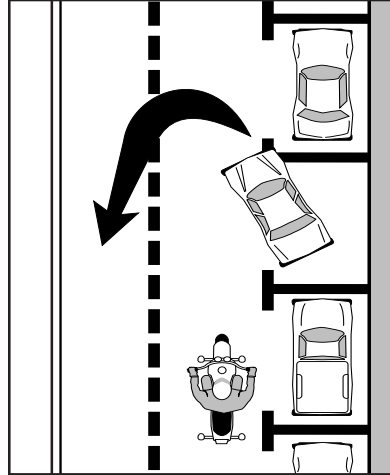
Test Yourself

Making eye contact with other drivers:

- A. Is a good sign they see you.
- B. Is not worth the effort it takes.
- C. Doesn't mean that the driver will yield.
- D. Guarantees that the other driver will yield to you.

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PARKED CARS



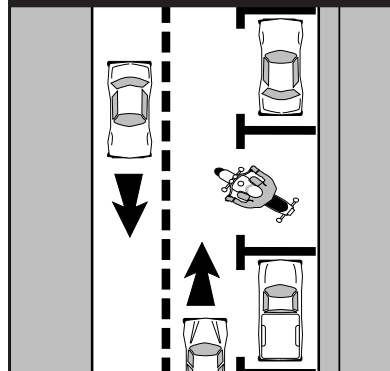
In either event, the driver might cut into your path. Slow down or change lanes to make room for someone cutting in.

Cars making a sudden U-turn are the most dangerous. They may cut you off entirely, blocking the whole roadway and leaving you with no place to go. Since you can't tell what a driver will do, slow down and get the driver's attention. Sound your horn and continue with caution.

PARKING AT THE ROADSIDE

Park at a 90° angle to the curb with your rear wheel touching the curb.

PARKING AT CURBS



**INCREASING
CONSPICUITY**

In crashes with motorcyclists, drivers often say that they never saw the motorcycle. From ahead or behind, a motorcycle’s outline is much smaller than a car’s. Also, it’s hard to see something you are not looking for, and most drivers are not looking for motorcycles. More likely, they are looking *through* the skinny, two-wheeled silhouette in search of cars that may pose a problem to them.

Even if a driver does see you coming, you aren’t necessarily safe. Smaller vehicles appear farther away, and seem to be traveling slower than they actually are. It is common for drivers to pull out in front of motorcyclists, thinking they have plenty of time. Too often, they are wrong.

However, you can do many things to make it easier for others to recognize you and your cycle.

CLOTHING

Most crashes occur in broad daylight. Wear bright colored clothing to increase your chances of being seen. Remember, your body is half of the visible surface area of the rider/motorcycle unit.

Bright orange, red, yellow or green jackets or vests are your best bets for being seen. Your helmet can do more than protect you in a crash. Brightly colored helmets can also help others see you.

Any bright color is better than drab or dark colors. Reflective, bright colored clothing (helmet and jacket or vest) is best.

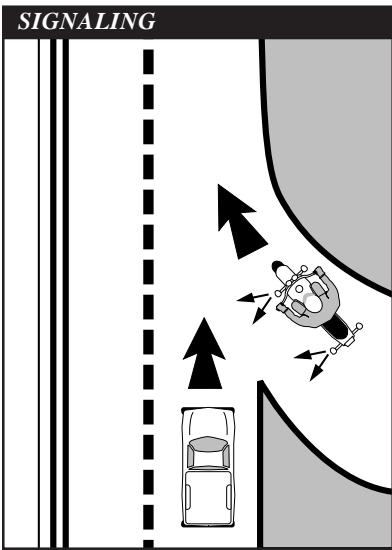
Reflective material on a vest and on the sides of the helmet will help drivers coming from the side spot you. Reflective material can also be a big help for drivers coming toward you or from behind.

HEADLIGHT

The best way to help others see your motorcycle is to keep the headlight on — *at all times* (although motorcycles sold in the U.S. since 1978 automatically have the headlights on when running.) Studies show that, during the day, a motorcycle with its light on is twice as likely to be noticed. Use of the high beam during the day increases the likelihood that oncoming drivers will see you. Use low beam at night and in cloudy weather.

SIGNALS

The signals on a motorcycle are similar to those on a car. They tell others what you plan to do.



CLOTHING
LIGHTS
SIGNALS

However, due to a rider's added vulnerability, signals are even more important. Use them anytime you plan to change lanes or turn. Use them even when you think no one else is around. It's the car you don't see that's going to give you the most trouble. Your signal lights also make you easier to spot. That's why it's a good idea to use your turn signals even when what you plan to do is obvious.

When you enter onto a freeway, drivers approaching from behind are more likely to see your signal blinking and make room for you.

Turning your signal light on before each turn reduces confusion and frustration for the traffic around you. Once you turn, make sure your signal is off or a driver may pull directly into your path, thinking you plan to turn again. Use your signals at every turn so drivers can react accordingly. Don't make them guess what you intend to do.

BRAKE LIGHT

Your motorcycle's brake light is usually not as noticeable as the brake lights on a car — particularly when your taillight is on. (It goes on with the headlight.) If the situation will permit, help others notice you by flashing your brake light before you slow down. It is especially important to flash your brake light before:

- **You slow more quickly** than others might expect (turning off a high-speed highway).
- **You slow where** others may not expect it (in the middle of a block or at an alley).

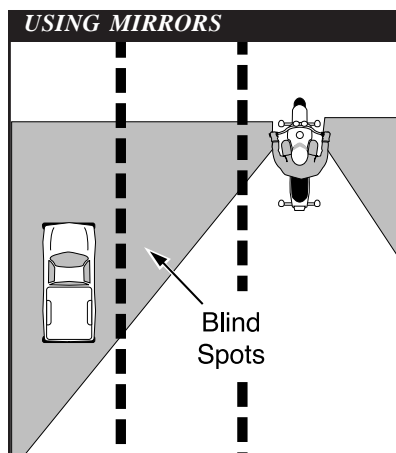
If you are being followed closely, it's a good idea to flash your brake light before you slow. The tailgater may be watching you and not see something ahead that will make you slow down. This will hopefully discourage them from tailgating and warn them of hazards ahead they may not see.

USING YOUR MIRRORS

While it's most important to keep track of what's happening ahead, you can't afford to ignore situations behind. Traffic conditions change quickly. Knowing what's going on behind is essential for you to make a safe decision about how to handle trouble ahead.

Frequent mirror checks should be part of your normal scanning routine. Make a special point of using your mirrors:

- **When you are stopped** at an intersection. Watch cars coming up from behind. If the driver isn't paying attention, he could be on top of you before he sees you.
- **Before you change lanes.** Make sure no one is about to pass you.
- **Before you slow down.** The driver behind may not expect you to slow, or may be unsure about where you will slow. For example, you signal a turn and the driver thinks you plan to turn at a distant intersection, rather than at a nearer driveway.



Some motorcycles have rounded (convex) mirrors. These provide a wider view of the road behind than do flat mirrors. They also make cars seem farther away than they really are. If you are not used to convex mirrors, get familiar with them. *(While you are stopped, pick out a parked car in your mirror. Form a mental image of how far away it is. Then, turn around and look at it to see how close you came.)* Practice with your mirrors until you become a good judge of distance. Even then, allow extra distance before you change lanes.

HEAD CHECKS

Checking your mirrors is not enough. Motorcycles have “blind spots” like cars. Before you change lanes, turn your head, and look to the side for other vehicles.

On a road with several lanes, check the far lane and the one next to you. A driver in the distant lane may head for the same space you plan to take.

Frequent head checks should be your normal scanning routine, also. Only by knowing what is happening *all around* you, are you fully prepared to deal with it.

HORN

Be ready to use your horn to get someone’s attention quickly.

It is a good idea to give a quick beep before passing anyone that may move into your lane.

Here are some situations:

- **A driver** in the lane next to you is driving too closely to the vehicle ahead and may want to pass.
- **A parked car** has someone in the driver’s seat.
- **Someone is in the street**, riding a bicycle or walking.

In an emergency, press the horn button loud and long. Be ready to stop or swerve away from the danger.

Keep in mind that a motorcycle’s horn isn’t as loud as a car’s, therefore, use it, but don’t rely on it. Other strategies may be appropriate along with the horn.

HEAD CHECKS

HORN